



AUDIT — BENTON DEVELOPMENT GROUP SPECIAL INVESTIGATION

Special Investigation. The Auditor of State released a report of a special investigation of the Benton Development Group (BDG) for the period of January 1, 2009, through August 31, 2014. The BDG is a nonprofit organization that provides assistance to communities, individuals, and businesses in Benton County to promote economic growth and vitality. The County is the primary source of funding for the organization.

The investigation was a result of concerns raised regarding certain financial transactions processed by the former Executive Director of BDG, Ranae Becker.

Findings. The investigation identified \$49,634 of improper or unsupported disbursements during the period under investigation. The investigation could not go further back in time because bank records and documentation prior to January 1, 2009, were not available. It was not possible to determine whether all collections were deposited properly because adequate records were not available.

Among the improper disbursements identified by the investigation was \$17,436 in improper purchases of a personal nature using BDG's credit card and \$12,825 in improper payroll disbursements to Ms. Becker and related payroll costs.

The report also identifies \$7,320 in unsupported disbursements to vendors and \$3,624 in unsupported credit card purchases. Because of the lack of sufficient supporting documentation, it was not possible to determine whether these expenditures were made for BDG operations or were personal in nature.

Fiduciary Oversight. The report notes that the composition of the BDG Board of Directors changed in January 2014 and the Board implemented new procedures to provide more oversight of BDG operations. The report finds that prior to January 2014, the Board failed to exercise proper fiduciary oversight.

The report includes recommendations to ensure sufficient oversight and strengthen internal controls.

Full Report Available. The full report can be found on the Auditor of State's [website](#).

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